

REPORT

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

IN COMPLIANCE

With a resolution of the Senate of the 11th instant, on the subject of disturbances with the Indians on the frontier of Arkansas.

JUNE 15, 1838.

Referred to the Committee on Military Affairs, and ordered to be printed.

DEPARTMENT OF WAR,
June 15, 1838.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit a communication from the Adjutant General, accompanied by copies of such letters of Brigadier General Arbuckle and Lieutenant Colonel Vose as indicate a hostile disposition on the part of the Indians on the Arkansas frontier. A subsequent letter, from the former, dated May 18, 1838, has been received by the Adjutant General, in which he informs the department that a portion of the Delawares, Quapaws, Creeks, Choctaws, and Chickasaws, had manifested, in council, a disposition to resort to acts of hostility against the United States; that no positive agreement to go to war had been determined upon, but the question would probably be decided at their next meeting. He regrets that, should war take place, they are not in a condition to meet it, in consequence of deficiency of force of any kind, and the necessary fortified places and supplies; but adds that, although the prospects on the frontier are rather gloomy at present, he hopes that peace will be continued.

The letter itself is not communicated, because General Arbuckle desires that it may not be made public, and I think its publicity might prove prejudicial to the public service. If, notwithstanding the wishes of the General, and the opinion of the department, the Senate desire that the letter should be communicated, it shall be immediately transmitted.

Very respectfully,

Your most obedient servant,

J. R. POINSETT.

HON. R. M. JOHNSON,
President of the Senate.

Blair & Rives, printers.

ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Washington, June 14, 1838.

SIR: In answer to the resolution of the Senate of the 11th instant, requesting information recently received indicating any hostile disposition on the part of the Indians on the Arkansas frontier, I respectfully submit, herewith, copies of official communications received from the commanding officers of Fort Gibson and Towson, marked A, B, and C.

I am, sir, with great respect,

Your obedient servant,

R. JONES,

Adjutant General.

Hon. J. R. POINSETT,
Secretary of War.

A.

HEAD QUARTERS, SEC. DEPARTMENT, S. DIVISION,
Fort Gibson, April 26, 1838.

SIR: I have the honor herewith to enclose copies of communications from the commanding officer of Fort Towson, under date of the 12th instant, by which it will be perceived that a disturbance has taken place on the south side of Red river, between the inhabitants and Choctaw Indians, at a point over which both Texas and the United States claim jurisdiction.

This circumstance will, it is believed, furnish sufficient evidence, that to insure peace and good order on the Red river frontier, it is necessary that the United States should possess, at least, all the country as far south as the Sabine river to its source, and as far west as where our western boundary line leaves Red river.

It is requested that the Government will decide what shall be done with the two Choctaws, now in confinement at Fort Towson, charged with having caused the unfortunate affray referred to in Lieutenant Colonel Vose's communication.

I fully concur in the opinion expressed by Colonel Vose, of the necessity of the military force on Red river being increased, at an early period.

I am, sir, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

M. ARBUCKLE,

Brevet Brig. Gen. Commanding.

To Brig. Gen. R. JONES,
Adjutant General, Washington.

B.

HEAD QUARTERS, THIRD INFANTRY,
Fort Towson, April 12, 1838.

SIR: Since my communication of this morning,* relative to the affray on the Red river, I have been informed by one of the agents for subsisting

* See letter, dated 13th April, to the Adjutant General, which follows this, and contains the substance of Colonel Vose's first letter referred to here.

the Chickasaws at the Blue, that there is a good deal of difficulty among the Chickasaws, Choctaws, and some Delawares, living there, and that he was afraid something serious would take place. I have written to them, and have recommended their remaining quiet, until the return of Captain Armstrong, who, I presume, will see that there is a proper understanding among them.

I think the time has now arrived when there should be an augmentation of the force upon this frontier, and I take the liberty to recommend that the whole of the third infantry be concentrated at this post with as little delay as practicable.

The population bordering on the Red river, and directly opposite the Choctaws, has greatly increased during the last year, and is still increasing. Difficulties are frequently taking place between the whites and Choctaws, and unless there is an imposing military force on this frontier, I fear we may have disasters of a serious nature.

Captain Bonneville will return to Fort Towson to-morrow, and will set off for Fort Gibson as soon as the transportation is ready for him.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

J. H. VOSE,

Lieut. Col. 3d infantry, Commanding.

Brig. Gen. M. ARBUCKLE,

*Commanding Second Department,
Western Division, Fort Gibson.*

C.

HEAD QUARTERS, 3D INFANTRY,
Fort Towson, April 13, 1838.

SIR: An affray between white people and Choctaws has recently taken place on the south side of the Red river, and about 10 miles west of the Kiamichi, in which a white man and Choctaw were killed; two white men and one woman and child wounded. The white people were undoubtedly the aggressors, as is generally the case in all Indian difficulties. But, in order to allay the great excitement among the white people, I have prevailed upon the Choctaws to give up two of the ringleaders in the affray, and they are now confined at the fort. I have given General Arbuckle the particulars of the affair, and requested instructions from him relative to the disposition of the prisoners; and in case he should not feel at liberty to give me such instructions, to refer the subject to higher authority. The population in that part of Arkansas near Fort Towson has increased very much during the last year, and continues to increase. Most of the people have thrown off their allegiance to Arkansas, and declare themselves under the Texan Government. Frequent collisions are taking place between the white people and the Choctaws; the Choctaws being thickly settled on one side of Red river, and the white people on the other side, with a number of stores, where liquor is kept in large quantities.

Some difficulties have already occurred among a part of the Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Delawares, who reside on the Blue river, in the upper Choctaw district.

Under these circumstances, I feel it my duty to recommend an immediate augmentation of the military force on this frontier. The whole of the 3d infantry will not, in my opinion, be a larger force than is required to preserve the peace and tranquillity of this part of the country.

We have no more quarters at this post than are required for the troops now here ; but temporary cabins could be put up in a very short time, and which would answer every purpose until the erection of the permanent work which is contemplated for this frontier.

I consider this command too small to justify any detachment from it.

I beg leave to add, that I have repeatedly urged the appointment of a sub-agent for the Choctaws, to reside in this part of the nation. It is impossible for Captain Armstrong, while he is superintendent for other tribes, and residing so far from the great body of the Choctaws, to give that attention to their affairs which is absolutely required. The Indians require an agent constantly with them.

I hope my remarks in this letter will not be thought intrusive. I have felt it my duty to make them.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

J. H. VOSE,

Lieut. Col. 3d infantry, Commanding.

Brig. Gen. R. JONES,

Adj. Gen. U. S. Army, Washington.